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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON CAMBODIA'S CWC STATUS

REF: A. A) PHNOM PENH 2142
[1](#)B. B) STATE 193643

[1](#)1. (SBU) On December 20, Acting DCM met with Lt. General Chau Phirun, Director General of the MOD's General Department of Material and Technique; Major General Chey Son, Chief of the Directorate of Chemical Protection, and his deputy, Lt. Colonel Yin Sothy. Acting DCM reviewed reftel B demarche points, summarizing USG interest in Cambodia's progress towards establishing a National Authority and submitting a national plan to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), as well as developing draft penal legislation.

[1](#)2. (SBU) MG Chey Son confirmed the MFA's response to us (reftel A) that a National Authority had been established earlier in 2006 by royal decree; the National Chemical Weapons Authority (NCWA) is chaired by the Minister of Defense. Chey Son provided the Embassy with a copy of the decree, which lists the participating ministries and government officials. Chey Con noted that Cambodia has participated in numerous regional and international workshops and conferences on the subject of chemical, nuclear, and biological weapons since 2003. He noted that Cambodia became signatory to the Chemical Weapons Convention and joined the OPCW in 2005. Since joining, the RGC has sent two reports to the OPCW concerning the organization of the NCWA as well as an implementation action plan for the NCWA's roles, functions, and duties. Chey Son added that the OPCW has sponsored three workshops in Cambodia -- one in 2005 and two in 2006. OPCW has promised financial assistance amounting to 15,000 Euros to the NCWA, of which 6,000 Euros have already been provided. The OPCW funds, as well as Japanese government assistance, have been used to buy three scanners to test chemical substances. The scanners have been installed at the Phnom Penh airport, the port of Sihanoukville, and the land border crossing with Vietnam at Bavette.

[1](#)3. (SBU) LG Chau Phirun said that Cambodia will address chemical weapons in conjunction with nuclear and biological weapons in the context of the NCWA, as the national body has the responsibility for the control over all such weapons. He explained that the Australian and Japanese governments have provided limited technical and material assistance to the NCWA. He said that the NCWA needs further help in several areas: first, the RGC requires legislation criminalizing activities prohibited by a number of UN conventions related to WMD to which Cambodia is a signatory country. Chau Phirun noted that Cambodia does not plan to draft legislation

exclusively for chemical weapons; rather, it seeks legislation that will enable Cambodia to meet its obligations not just on the CWC, but on other conventions as well. Cambodia has already requested the OPCW to assist through the provision of a legal advisor to help with the drafting of such legislation, but the OPCW has not yet responded to the Cambodian government request, he said. A second area where the RGC could use help is in the area of human resources and capacity building within the NCWA. The RGC envisions the NCWA having a staff of 100 personnel. Finally, the MOD is in the process of building a technical school due to be completed in 2007, which will include a chemical protection component. To date, there is no equipment or laboratory supplies for this portion of the school. LG Chau Phirun added that the RGC would like to have additional scanners at other sites in Cambodia, but lacks the funding to buy them.

14. (SBU) From our conversation, it appears that the RGC is still in the early stages of meeting its obligations under the CWC but has made some progress. Notably, the National Authority exists on paper, but has yet to realize its organizational structure due to budgetary limitations. According to MG Chey Son, his office has received copies of model legislation from the OPCW, Australia and Japan, but has made little progress because the drafts are reportedly in English and not the Khmer language.
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